

Memo

To: Mike McLaughlin, City Manager *MM*
From: Greg Varda, Assistant Director of Recreation Programs *GV*
VIA: Julie McHale, Recreation Director *JM*
Date: October 15, 2015
Re: Relocation of the Holiday Tree Lighting Event

The Recreation Department is requesting approval to relocate the Holiday Tree Lighting event. The tree lighting is the kick-off event of the Festival of Lights and currently is held on the front lawn of the Community Center. While the present location is spacious and able to accommodate a large number of people, staff has experienced some problems over the years.

1. **Congestion in the front parking lot of the Community Center** – The tree lighting take place at the same time that the crafters are moving into the Community Center to set up their space for the Annual Craft Show. There have been issues with parking as crafters would like to get as close to the building as possible when unloading.
2. **Wet Conditions** – In the event of wet weather the front lawn of the Community Center gets very swampy. Unfortunately people need to stand in this boggy area to see the stage.
3. **Safety** – As the fire truck turns right into the Community Center parking lot, it is not uncommon for children to run toward the fire truck to see Santa. As part of our risk management assessment, we station staff along the sidewalk next to the road to prevent children from entering the road area.
4. **Lights** – Lighting on the Community Center front lawn is at a minimum. Public Works hooks up construction lights to provide visibility for performers and speakers. Some lights are fixed in the direction of the crowd which makes it visually uncomfortable to continue to look towards the stage.

Staff would like to relocate the Tree Lighting event to the Roosevelt Center Mall. Staff will purchase a 10-12 foot evergreen tree, ball in burlap, which will be decorated for the holiday season. After the New Year, the tree will be planted at a Greenbelt site to be determined. Staff would also like to increase the holiday lights and decorations in the Roosevelt Center Mall. Other than the change in location, the event schedule would remain the same with the potential to add new activities. The annual date and time would not change.

Scheduled Activities:

- The night opens at 7pm with ERHS Glee Club or another singing group with local ties sings holiday songs.
- Hot chocolate and cookies will continue to be served for free.
- The Greenbelt Concert Brass Band (GCBB) plays holiday tunes.
- Santa arrives on a fire truck around 7:30pm while the GCBB plays “Here Comes Santa Clause”.
- Santa and his helpers hand out candy canes
- The Holiday Tree lights along with other illuminated objects are turned on by Santa and Council at 7:45pm.

Possible additional activities could include:

- Christmas crafts workshop at a merchant’s store.
- Christmas movies at the Old Greenbelt Theatre.
- Roosevelt Center merchants will have an opportunity to participate.

Staff attended a Roosevelt Center Merchants Association (RCMA) meeting on September 30 to present the relocation concept. The merchants were very receptive to the idea. Merchants will have an opportunity to participate through in-kind service or sponsorship. Intra-departmental meetings were held with Public Works, Recreation and Administration (Public Information & Community Promotion). All believe that this idea will promote and increase foot traffic in the Roosevelt Center during the Holiday Season and increase the sense of community in Greenbelt.

Estimated Expense

• Infrastructure – Electric with photo cell need to be installed on three light poles	\$1200
• New decorations/LED lights/Roosevelt Center Mall decorations	\$1000
• 10-12 foot evergreen type tree with root ball & large potting bowl	\$600
• Miscellaneous Supplies	\$500

Presently there is \$3200 budgeted in the Special Events – Festival of Lights account. Approximately \$2000 can be used to offset the cost.

If Council desires, the Holiday Tree on the Community Center front lawn could still be donned with lights.